United Nations S/2002/944

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 August 2002

Original: English

Letter dated 20 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the official representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia of 19 August 2002, in response to the interview of the Ambassador for Special Assignments, V. Kolotusha, with the Russian Information Agency "Novosti" of 12 August 2002, concerning the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Revaz **Adamia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

02-53491 (E) 260802 260802

Annex to the letter dated 20 August 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Russian]

Statement by the Official Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

The interview given on 12 August 2002 by the "Special Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation", the Ambassador for Special Assignments, Mr. Vasily Kolotusha, to the Russian Information Agency "Novosti" concerning the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, did not go unnoticed in Tbilisi.

It seems that the arguments adduced by the "Special Representative" in this interview are nothing other than an attempt to justify the inconsistent actions of the Russian side with respect to the problems of resolving the conflict and the destructive position of the separatist regime in Abkhazia.

In particular, the steps taken by the Russian side of late run counter not only to the well-known position of President Vladimir Putin, but also to that of the international community concerning the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. The intensification of the contacts between the representatives of the official Russian authorities and the separatist regime, the establishment of comprehensive contacts between the constituent entities of the Russian Federation and the self-proclaimed republic, the introduction of a visa regime that discriminates against Georgia, and the campaign, unprecedented in international practice, to give Russian citizenship en masse to the inhabitants of Abkhazia, Georgia, are regarded in Tbilisi as an infringement of sovereignty and a deliberate show of disrespect towards a neighbouring State.

It should be noted, in this connection, that a Russian Government delegation composed of high-ranking representatives of the Presidential administration and of the Government of the Russian Federation visited Abkhazia in early August. Despite repeated appeals to the Russian side for an explanation in respect of this occurrence, no clear answer has been received in Tbilisi.

In addition, it is worth recalling that the facts cited are nothing other than a blatant violation of the commitments entered into by the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), including the Russian Federation, in accordance with the decision of the CIS Council of Heads of State of 19 January 1996. It is precisely such steps by the Russian side and the contradictory nature of its statements and actions that determine the harshness and implacability of the positions of the Abkhaz separatists.

At the very least, Mr. Kolotusha's statement concerning the causes of the conflict is incorrect. By virtually accusing Georgia of starting the armed conflict, he openly justifies "the natural reaction" of the Abkhaz separatists, namely, the undermining of Georgia's territorial integrity and the ethnic cleansing which they carried out. Statements that "the Georgian side has raised only one issue — the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia — to an absolute, whereas there are other aspects, including the humanitarian situation in Abkhazia" are bewildering. In this connection, the "Special Representative" should be reminded that sovereignty

and territorial integrity are the basic foundations of any State, including the Russian Federation.

With regard to the humanitarian aspects of the problem, to which Mr. Kolotusha gives special attention, we wish to underline that the Georgian side has never refused the implementation of humanitarian projects in this region of Georgia, provided that they are coordinated with it. Most regrettably, the "Special Representative" for some reason neglected to mention the fate of the 300,000 refugees and displaced persons who were driven out of Abkhazia, Georgia, by the separatists and the forces supporting them and who find themselves today in the most difficult of conditions as they await the settlement of this protracted conflict. Clearly, Mr. Kolotusha does not class this problem as a humanitarian one.

Of particular interest is the part of the interview where Mr. Kolotusha discusses the so-called Boden document prepared by the group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia and approved by the United Nations Security Council. Here, the "Special Representative" attempts to lay all the blame for the Abkhaz side's refusal to consider these proposals on Georgia, accusing it of not fulfilling the 1994 agreements.

Mr. Kolotusha shows the utmost candour in explaining the position taken by the representative of the Russian Federation at a recent meeting of the United Nations Security Council and the refusal of the Russian side to use its influence on the Abkhaz side to convince it to accept the Boden document, declaring word for word that: "There can be no question of putting any pressure on the Abkhaz side. This has to do with the fact that, first, Georgia's own conduct has not been above reproach either and, second, in the current context of Russian-Georgian relations, such actions would be incomprehensible and unacceptable to our public opinion".

In the light of the above, the following question arises: **are the opinions and conclusions of the "Special Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation" a reflection of his personal position, or is the Russian side reviewing its fundamental approaches to the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, including the decision of the CIS Council of Heads of State of 19 January 1996?**

Tbilisi, 19 August 2002